

EXCLUSIVE A MUSICAL JOURNEY THROUGH NORTHEAST INDIA

TRAVEL + LEISURE

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DREAM
TRIPS

GREAT GETAWAY IDEAS FOR
A ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS

OUR CRUISE
GUIDE 2010
THE TOP
NEW SHIPS +
ITINERARIES
PLUS
WHERE TO
FIND VALUE

LAS VEGAS
LAOS
PRAGUE
NEW ZEALAND



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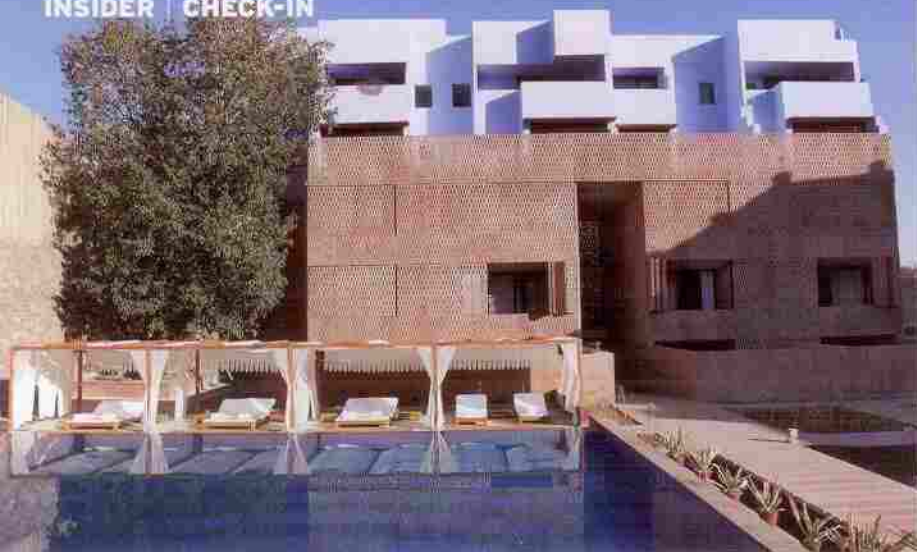
INSIDER



The Jodhpur-blue tuk-tuk awaits you near the entrance at Raas, in Jodhpur.

SERENDIPITY IN JODHPUR

Jaw-dropping views, a design diktat where old and new blend harmoniously, and the only luxury address in the walled city—Raas is a boutique hotel with all the right ingredients, plus more. By Monalika Namchoom. Photographed by Charudutt Chittrak



Chic Sanctuary Clockwise from above: The pool with views of the contemporary wing at Raas, in Jodhpur; the service is discreet and always offered with a smile; the airy lounge area at the Baradari; inside one of the luxury rooms; delectable dishes are the order of the day at Raas.



It's true, stepping into Jodhpur's newest hotel Raas feels like a chance discovery. Located amidst the chaotic, and colourful northeastern quarter of the walled city, you'll be lucky to find it since there will be no bold nameplate proclaiming its existence. Walk past the grand *pol* or stone gateway and you enter a little courtyard that houses the reception area, where smiling staffers further escort you inside. Cross the latticed corridor into the central courtyard, and one is hardly prepared for the view that unveils itself—that of the magnificent Mehrangarh Fort looming right above you—along with the synchronized shower of rose petals from above! Now here's a welcome that's hard to forget. Raas not only has the exclusivity of being the lone luxury property in the old town, but also provides one of the most amazing vistas of the imposing Jodhpur *ka kila*.

SEAMLESS ALLURE

Raas is made up of three 18th-century structures that have been lovingly restored, alongside which stand four contemporary blocks. "Architecturally the challenge was where to place the new buildings and make them fit flawlessly within the old city. Our aim was to make it a microcosm of the walled city," says Nikhilendra Singh, the man behind Jodhpur's newest hip haven, who only approved the design after seeing 26 options. It was imperative for the old and new to contrast yet complement each other, a feat that was achieved by the combined efforts of Lotus Design and Praxis Inc. Raas has an organic flow that is commendable, with a central courtyard that holds the three heritage buildings, along with water bodies, gardens and the inviting infinity pool. Jodhpur's red sandstone has been used liberally but what makes it unique is that they have been given a contemporary touch with designs and patterns that are modern. Drawing inspiration from the old screen *jaalis* that are ubiquitous in the region, Raas is blanketed in this pretty latticework that creates interesting shadows through the day.

INTIMATE SPACES

This exclusive hotel has a total of 39 rooms and suites, all with equally striking views of the fort—except for the four Garden Rooms. The walls consist of hand-cut Jodhpur stone panels which have been hand-dressed with circular patterns that



are also Raas's signature motif. Even the stone headboard comes with cut-outs of this spiral design which when lit, casts a soft, inviting glow on the bed. The black terrazzo flooring has been poured in situ and flows to become the bed as well as the cosy diwan seating. Every room has a private balcony with latticed panels that can be conveniently folded away for uninterrupted views of the fort. Mod-cons include a flat-screen TV, DVD player, and a fully-stocked mini bar. Step into your bathroom and you enter a white space with pretty pebble-wash terrazzo, complete with a bathtub, rain shower, Kama Ayurveda amenities, and soft cotton bath robes from Shades of India.

■ DELICIOUS PURSUITS

A visit to Mehrangarh Fort is de rigueur and the best part is that it's just a 15-minute trek from Raas! Or, hop into the hotel's tuk-tuk that wears its Jodhpur-blue hue with élan, and discover the walled city's many delights. Once you're done exploring, come back to the calm confines of Raas and spend the day soaking in the pool or book a massage at their Serena Spa. The Baradari (or 12 pillars) which houses the lounge area and extends onto the terraced dining space, is the heart of the property, and the perfect place to sample executive chef Amrita Mukherjee's delectable dishes. Nibble on European plates during lunch and come evening, when the hotel takes on a romantic hue, ask for a table setting overlooking the haveli. Dinner comprises Indian fare cooked to perfection, starring dishes like *zaffrani jhinga*, *Peshawari mung tikka*, and *gosht korma*. For a perfect finale, order the delightful Granny Smith jalebis.

■ GREEN TOUCHES

Espousing the highest standards of sustainable design, Raas has been developed using local materials and regional artisans and master-craftsmen. What's more, the *jaalis* act as passive coolers while Jodhpur's sunny climes have been harnessed for solar energy to heat the hot water in the rooms. Raas not only has its own sewage treatment plant but also harvests rainwater, and the air-conditioning used enjoys a Platinum-LEED rating. Looks like Raas's eco-friendly moves will make it a real winner.

Tunwari ka Jhalra, Makrana Mohalla, Jodhpur; 91-291/263-6455; raasjodhpur.com; doubles from Rs 13,000. +



Stylish Elements
Clockwise from left: Raas's latticed corridors come alive, and are scented with *dhoop* every evening; the hand-dressed wall and a lamp with cut-out *jaali* motifs in the bedroom; breathtaking views of Mehrangarh Fort; owner Nikhileendra Singh with his Jack Russell terrier Charles; even the bathroom looks out onto the fort.



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ROMANTIC DREAM TRIPS

From a beach resort in Zanzibar to a Costa Rican tree house to a haveli in Jodhpur's walled city, T+L scanned the globe for a range of experiences that will put you in the mood. Read on for 40 great ideas.

CHARUOTTI CHILBAY, STYLED BY SHAHEEN MENRA; MODEL: TANNIN/ND MODEL AGENCY; DRESS BY WENDY L RODRIGUES AT OGAAN; EARRINGS, ICE ACCESSORIES, BRACELET BY RAHUL POPLI AT AMETHYST; SANDALS, VENUS STEPS; OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF AILLA VILLAS HADAHAA



At Raas, a brand new boutique resort in Jodhpur's walled city. Opposite: The cabana of the one bedroom pool villas at Ailla Villas Hadahaa, in the Maldives.